

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Something new out of Africa? Chinese, US and EU strategies for the continent

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ABSTRACT

The seventh College-to-College meeting between the European Commission and the African Union Commission underscores the close cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Africa. Institutional and political relations have intensified in recent years, coinciding with a renewed international interest in an African continent whose economic growth in the past decade has been remarkably strong. The United States (US) and China have also recently strengthened their links with Africa. While these three actors frame their relations with Africa in different ways, their interests converge around two broad areas: i) Africa's economic potential and the need to intensify trade and investment to generate economic growth and development; and ii) concerns about peace and security – and notably the threats posed by armed conflict and terrorist groups.

In light of this renewed international interest and other important factors – including the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020 – the European Parliament should embark on an ambitious and strategic political reflection on the EU's relations with Africa. Parliament should recognise both the potential and vulnerabilities of the continent, as well as the EU's own varied interests across policy areas. Alongside other actors, including the US and China, Parliament should also work to ensure that Africa finds its due place in the changing international order.

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1 What place for 'rising Africa' in the global order?

Although Africa's vulnerabilities have not been erased, its impressive economic performance has renewed international interest in the continent.

Over the past decade, Africa's economic expansion has been remarkably strong, with an [average GDP growth rate](#) of 5.07 % per year between 2005 and 2014. This impressive performance has fostered an optimistic 'Africa rising' narrative and renewed international interest in the continent. These numbers, however, partially mask continued vulnerabilities in many of the 54 African countries. Political crises and armed conflict are accompanied by public health emergencies (such as the Ebola epidemic in West Africa) and volatile global markets. (The current slide in energy prices is likely to affect oil-producing countries such as Angola and Nigeria). A considerable challenge remains: transforming economic growth into sustainable development and poverty eradication for the 400 million people (36 % of the population) still living on less than USD 1.25 a day. While China, the US and the EU are, arguably, the most important external actors in Africa (and the focus of this paper), they are not the only ones. Japan has traditionally maintained intense development cooperation with Africa, and most recently there has been a growing interest in Africa on the part of 'emerging' international players, including Turkey, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, India and Brazil. Even Russia, which after the collapse of the USSR largely abandoned the continent, has recently – and in a context of conflict with the West – sought to reengage with Africa.

Rapid growth is linked to the increased Chinese demand for African goods.

The broader question asked by this paper is whether this 'rising Africa' and the renewed international interest is changing Africa's place in the international context, and potentially moving it closer to the centre of a global order which has so far largely relegated the continent to its margins. Certainly, the striking upward turn in Africa's economic fortunes has not taken place in a vacuum. Rather, Africa's growth has responded first and foremost to the increased global – and most specifically Chinese – demand for the continent's raw materials and energy resources in the past decade. Some view this stronger Chinese engagement with reticence, considering it to be an exclusively self-interested pursuit to exploit Africa's resources. However – leaving aside the debate on the character and merits of Chinese economic activity in Africa – it is undeniable that China's growing involvement has both increased international interest in the continent and brought Africa's economic potential to the centre of discussions.

Tapping Africa's economic potential is a common interest of the EU, the US and China.

The economic potential of a continent of 1.1 billion people (forecast to double in size by 2050) with a growing purchasing power – consumer spending by the middle class reached an estimated quarter of Africa's GDP in 2012 according to the African Development Bank (AFDB)¹ – and endowed

¹ While there is a general agreement that Africa's middle class is rapidly growing and has an important economic and political role to play, estimates on the total number of people that can be considered part of this category vary widely, depending on the national contexts and/or the threshold used for its definition. The AFDB considers that 123 million Africans fall into the category of 'stable middle-class' (earning USD 4-20 a day). For a detailed

with abundant natural resources is the most important common interest in the EU, US and Chinese approaches to Africa, even if concrete strategies diverge. Economic matters – alongside a perceived feeling of needing to ‘catch up’ with China – occupied a central place in last year’s fourth EU-Africa summit and in the first ever US-Africa Leaders’ Summit in August 2014. This year, it will be China’s turn to meet African leaders, when the 6th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is held in South Africa. For China, as for the US and the EU, the emphasis on boosting trade and investment in Africa is accompanied by a discourse on the need to translate growth into sustainable development for Africa’s population. Interestingly, the emphasis on trade and investment as tools to eradicate poverty has come at the expense of traditional development tools such as official development assistance (ODA).

These three actors also share concerns about the security situation in Africa.

A second common concern for the EU, the US and China in their relations with African countries is related to the security situation on the continent, notably the threats posed by terrorist groups in the Sahel, extending from Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, through Mali and Libya to al-Shabaab in Somalia; organised crime, including drug and arms trafficking, human smuggling, piracy in the Gulf of Aden, where a strong international engagement in the past few years has, however, largely reduced this threat, and in the Gulf of Guinea, where piracy incidents, and their violence, have recently increased; and the risk of armed conflict owing to the fragile political institutions in numerous African countries. Both the EU and the US have long presented peace and security as one of their overarching interests in the African continent. For China, however, this is a relatively new – but also unavoidable – aspect as its presence in Africa grows. Two clear and recent examples include the conflict in South Sudan (in whose oil industry China has heavily invested) and the 2011 intervention and war in Libya, for which China had to organise the evacuation of 30 000 nationals.

The EU, the US and China all consider political dialogue with African actors essential, but the three have markedly different perspectives.

This growing engagement in African peace and security matters may come into conflict with China’s long-standing ideological defence of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. This potential contradiction clearly highlights the need for consistent political engagement between China and individual African countries and regional organisations. High-level political dialogue on bilateral and multilateral issues is recurrently emphasised by China – as it is also by the US and the EU – as a third, and crucial, element of its strategy towards the continent. It is also the area in which the most visible difference between the three actors can be perceived, as both the EU and the US rank good governance and respect for human rights as key elements of their relations with African countries. This has caused controversies in relation to particular countries (Sudan, Zimbabwe) and issues, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), and has led to a perceived opposition between Western (US, EU) positions and China. While the former have been criticised for their supposed paternalism and post-

The European Parliament should adopt an ambitious and strategic political approach to the African continent.

discussion see Christian Kingombe, ‘[Africa’s Rising Middle Class amid Plenty and Extreme Poverty](#)’, ECDPM, October 2014.

colonial hang-ups, the latter has sought to deflect criticisms of its exclusive interest in African resources, through a narrative of championing the interests of the global South.

Despite these opposing narratives, the reality is much less clear-cut. This in-depth analysis aims to show that there are in fact clear convergences in China, the US and the EU's approaches to Africa, notably their emphasis on the continent's economic potential and the concerns over peace and security, even if crucial differences remain in their political approaches². The EU, which has over the past five decades developed a dense network of institutional links with Africa, has an important role to play in contributing to shaping Africa's changing engagement with different international actors. As the concluding section notes, the European Parliament should adopt a more ambitious and strategic political approach to the African continent, taking into account the parallel – and sometimes conflicting – interests of different policy areas (development, trade, security, migration, energy) and helping Africa find its due place in the changing international order.

2 China: The 'growing pains' of a changing relationship

China's modern relations with Africa date back to the 1960s period of decolonisation.

Far from being a newcomer to Africa, China's modern relations with the continent³ date back to the 1960s, in the context of decolonisation and an emerging Third World. The engagement at the time was driven by ideology and politics, and it continued to be so in the following decades as Beijing sought the recognition of the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China over Taiwan, and to recover international support after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre⁴. China's solidarity with Africa was not only rhetorical: the country has provided development assistance to African countries since the 1960s when it funded the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia railway (TAZARA). Since then, the volume of China's foreign aid has increased considerably, reaching USD 7.1 billion in 2013; approximately half of Chinese aid is spent in Africa⁵. Despite the radical transformation undergone by China, the country

²Three important caveats should be noted in relation to this paper. First, it is limited in that it looks only at external partners' strategies for engaging with Africa, leaving largely aside Africa's own perspectives and initiatives towards these partners and its own priorities for continental development. Second, the paper adopts a very wide focus – and thus has an unavoidable level of generalisation – in looking at the engagement with Africa as a whole (at a continental or sub-Saharan African level) and not with individual countries or in specific sectors, which would be a much more ambitious undertaking. Finally, for the EU, it looks only at the activities and strategies of the EU and its institutions and not at those of individual Member States, some of which are very active in Africa.

³Historically speaking, some of the earliest contacts between China and Africa date back to the Zheng He expeditions to the Eastern Africa coast between 1413 and 1433.

⁴For a comprehensive overview of China's policy in Africa see: Yun Sun, '[Africa in China's foreign policy](#)', Brookings, April 2014.

⁵Total estimate according to Naohiro Kitano and Yukinori Harada, '[Estimating China's Foreign Aid 2001-2013](#)', JICA Research Institute, June 2014.

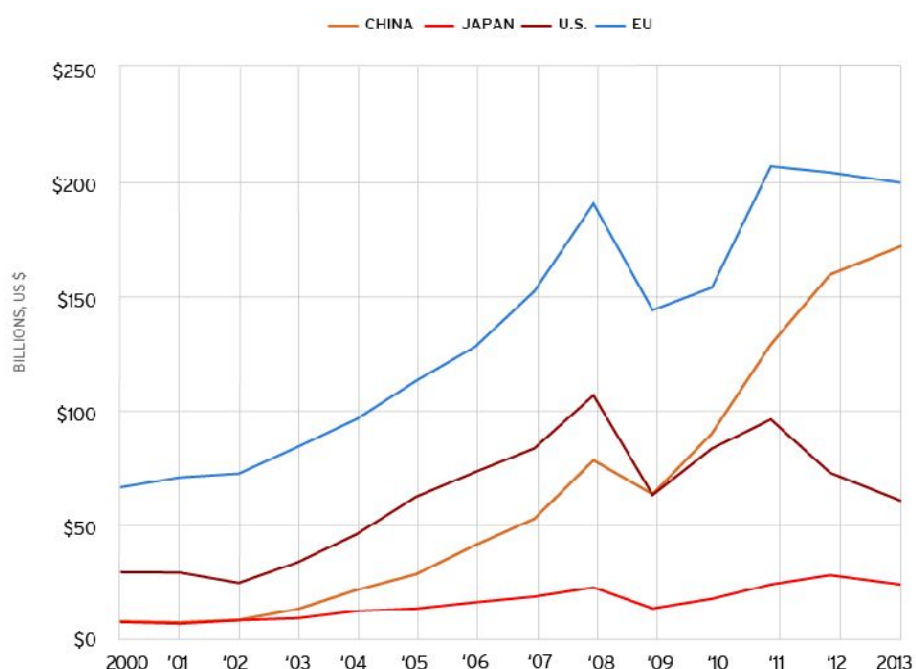
But the booming economic relationship of the past decade has put the focus on China's Africa policies.

China's main interests have been Africa's natural and energy resources.

continues to present itself as a fellow developing country and to emphasise the ideological South-South cooperation character of its relations with Africa. China's 'all round' foreign policy considers Africa and other developing countries as the 'foundation' for its foreign policy⁶.

Nonetheless, it has been the exponential growth of economic relations between China and Africa since the start of the 21st century that has thrust China's Africa policy to the centre of international attention, as well as being generally considered a central factor behind the continent's improved economic performance. Sino-African trade has passed from USD 10 billion in 2000 to USD 200 billion in 2012 (Figure 1), partly as a result of the 'Going Out' strategy encouraging Chinese enterprises to boost outward investment, which was adopted by the Chinese Politburo in 2000. China's economic engagement with Africa has been led by state-owned enterprises at the central or provincial level, but increasingly includes also private sector actors and even small and medium-sized enterprises.

Figure 1:
Sub-Saharan Africa's total trade (imports and exports) with major partners.



Source: Brookings Institution

Africa has become a favoured destination for Chinese investment owing to the continent's important energy reserves and abundant natural resources, which are required to fuel China's rapid economic growth. Since the mid-2000s Chinese enterprises in the oil and mining sectors have increased their presence in various African countries. Chinese investment is usually accompanied by infrastructure development financed through loans offered

For geographical distribution see: Yun Sun, 'Africa in China's New Foreign Aid White Paper', Brookings, June 2014.

⁶ This is one of the categories, complemented by big powers (the key), China's periphery (the priority) and multilateral platforms (the stage). See Yun Sun, 'Africa in China's foreign policy'.

The exponential growth in China's economic relations with Africa has created some challenges for the country, as its economic interests have sometimes clashed with political ones.

The 2012 Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) outlined six objectives for Sino-African cooperation.

to African governments by China's policy banks – notably the Export-Import (Exim) Bank and the China Development Bank (CDB). Commodity-backed loans (also known as 'resources-for-equity swaps') have also been used in large operations, such as oil exploration in Angola (which pioneered the model in Africa) and the acquisition of copper and cobalt mining rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The majority of Sino-African trade is thus concentrated on a few countries – Angola, Sudan, DRC, Zimbabwe – and dominated by the extractive sectors: over 80 % of China's imports in 2011 were made up of oil and other natural resources, a slightly higher percentage than for the EU (for which fuels represent around 60 % of imports).

The exponential growth of China's economic activities in Africa, however, has not been without challenges for the country. First, China's initial exclusive focus on the extractive sectors and other aspects of its economic activities, such as the low level of integration with the economic activities of the various African countries in which it is present (visible, for example, in the importing of necessary material and the widespread use of Chinese labour instead of local workers), have fostered criticisms regarding the limited positive impact of China's activities on local development and job creation. Some go as far as considering the Chinese presence as a new form of economic colonialism. Second, the deepening of economic ties has inevitably led also to the broadening and transformation of Sino-African relations. Most directly, the numerous investments in the continent and the increased presence of Chinese citizens in Africa⁷ have made China much more exposed to the developments on the ground. The Libyan war has already been mentioned, but other examples include attacks on Chinese workers by armed and terrorist groups in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan and Cameroon. This has generated growing demands for the Chinese Government to guarantee the security of its nationals. A third challenge for China – closely related to the previous points – is that the rapid growth of Chinese economic activities in Africa has sometimes clashed with political interests, which has led to tensions among China's government departments. In the absence of a clear Africa strategy, the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) have sometimes disagreed and competed for the lead in African policymaking, particularly regarding the allocation of aid: the MFA considers aid a political instrument to strengthen bilateral ties and promote development, while the MOFCOM (responsible for aid allocation) sees it as a tool to foster Chinese economic growth and prefers to allocate it to countries with great commercial opportunities – usually resource-rich countries⁸.

To help devise a coherent strategy for Sino-African relations, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has been organised every three years since 2000 (alternately in Africa and China) to strengthen ties. The evolution of political relations is visible in the move from the abstract calls for a more balanced world order made in the inaugural meeting to the concrete points

⁷ Although reliable statistics are lacking, some estimates put the number of Chinese migrants in Africa at between one and two million.

⁸ Yun Sun, 'Africa in China's foreign policy', Brookings, April 2014.

of cooperation included in the [Beijing Declaration](#) and the [Action Plan \(2013-2015\)](#), which were adopted at the 5th FOCAC ministerial meeting held in 2012 on the theme 'Build on past achievements and open up new prospects for the new type of China-Africa strategic partnership'. According to the Beijing Declaration, the key objectives of Sino-African cooperation are:

1. **To further strengthen political consultation and strategic dialogue**, including through high-level visits and sharing of experiences, and to respect and support each other's core interests.
2. **To increase the exchanges and cooperation required to make Africa's Peace and Security Architecture operational**, support Africa's peace and security capabilities, and enhance coordination in multilateral institutions.
3. **To strengthen China's cooperation with the AU and sub-regional organisations** in Africa and take joint measures to promote Africa's unity and regional integration.
4. **To expand mutually beneficial economic cooperation** – in trade, investment, poverty reduction, infrastructure, capacity building, human resources, food security, etc. – and handle problems and difficulties arising from this cooperation.
5. **To continue to strengthen people-to-people and cultural exchanges** and cooperation between the two sides.
6. **To further strengthen cooperation between the two sides in international affairs** and take each other's legitimate concerns and aspirations fully into account.

These focus on:

- political consultation
- Africa's Peace and Security Architecture
- the AU and sub-regional organisations
- economic cooperation
- people-to-people and cultural exchanges
- international affairs.

Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang toured Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola and Kenya in 2014, announcing new credit lines and signing important infrastructure contracts.

Sino-African relations are thus often discussed in the context of the huge increase in economic exchanges of the past decade, and it is indeed the case that bilateral trade and Chinese investment in Africa remain a central pillar. In May 2014 the Chinese Prime Minister, Li Keqiang, [toured four African countries](#) – Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola and Kenya. During his visit, he announced that Chinese credit lines available to African countries would increase from USD 20 to 30 billion. Li also attended the signing of huge rail infrastructure contracts, notably the USD 3.6 billion Mombasa-Nairobi link in Kenya (for which 90 % of the financing will be provided by China's Exim Bank) and the USD 13.1 billion coastal rail project in Nigeria to be carried out by the China Railway Construction Corporation.

China's growing presence in Africa makes its engagement in peace and security matters unavoidable.

Nonetheless, China's increasing involvement in Africa presents important challenges for the country. These relate not only to the criticisms of China as an exclusively economically self-interested actor – defined by Prime Minister Li as '[growing pains](#)' during his African tour – but also to the unavoidable growing involvement of China in Africa's political and peace and security debates. A notable example in this regard comes from South Sudan, where China's important economic interests have been threatened by the outbreak of civil conflict. China has been active in promoting a negotiated peace agreement (so far not reached) and recently announced that 700 troops will

join the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). This will be the first time that China has sent an infantry battalion to a UN peacekeeping mission (although a smaller 'protection unit' was sent to Mali in 2013), and it highlights the growing involvement of the country in African peace and security matters, and its pragmatic interpretation of the respect for national sovereignty that is one of the key pillars of China's foreign policy. The key questions going forward will be the extent to which China's more active engagement will be maintained, how this wider-ranging Chinese agenda will be defined in relation to African countries, regional actors and multilateral institutions, and the potential for cooperation with actors such as the EU and the US.

3 The United States: Re-engaging with the continent

Africa does not occupy a central place in US global foreign policy strategy.

While historical links between the United States (US) and African countries date back centuries, it is fair to argue that the continent has not traditionally been at the centre of US foreign policy. From a geostrategic perspective, Africa occupies a marginal position in the US post-World War II grand strategy centred in Europe and the Middle East, and is also in the margins of the more recent US 'pivot' towards Asia. Nonetheless, the Cold War saw the US closely monitor developments across the continent. While the US largely avoided direct military intervention on the continent, it carried out covert operations and supported loyal regimes in proxy conflicts (Congo-Kinshasa, Angola). Throughout the 1990s the US largely disengaged from Africa after the botched intervention in Somalia (1993) and the failure to prevent the Rwandan genocide (1994). This disengagement ended, however, in the new century, as the 'global war on terror' strategy included the Horn of Africa (notably Somalia) as one of its battlefields.

The US is the world's largest development aid donor and has programmes dedicated to Africa.

Nonetheless, US interests and areas of engagement in Africa since the end of the Cold War have remained constant and centred around four key axes⁹: i) security/counterterrorism, ii) energy supply, iii) cooperation on health issues, notably the fight against HIV/AIDS, and iv) promotion of governance standards. Each of these four different areas has evolved independently and is managed by different departments in the US administration. The US is also the world's largest development aid donor (USD 31.5 billion in 2013) and much of this aid is channelled through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). [USAID's Bureau for Africa](#) has 27 bilateral and regional missions in Africa and seeks to 'improve access to and delivery of health services, to support more accountable and democratic institutions, to start businesses and foster an environment attractive to private investment, and to stave off conflict and strengthen communities'. In addition, concrete initiatives such as the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)), launched in 2003 by George W. Bush, have contributed to the visibility and popularity not just of the US but of President Bush himself in many parts of

⁹ Ian Taylor, 'The international relations of Sub-Saharan Africa', New York: Continuum, 2010.

the African continent.

Energy supply –traditionally a key US interest in Africa – has become much less important since the US’s ‘shale revolution’.

Energy supply has been another constant interest of the US in Africa, with American oil companies playing an important role in countries such as Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. However, a remarkable change has occurred in the past five years: as the US has begun producing its own shale gas and oil, there has been a marked steep decline in oil imports from Africa. Given the weighting of energy imports as a proportion of total US imports from Africa, overall trade has also declined (see Figure 1 above). In July last year it was reported¹⁰ that, for the first time since records began in 1973, no Nigerian oil was exported to US refineries, whereas at the peak of this oil trade in 2006, 1.3 million barrels were imported into the US each day. The full implications of this radical realignment in the geopolitics of energy have not yet been fully explored¹¹.

Fighting terrorism in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa is a growing concern for the US.

Another significant change in US-Africa relations has been the growing concern about terrorist activities on the continent, particularly in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions. This started before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, with the al-Qaeda bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) in 1998, and has greatly increased since then. The creation of the Africa Command ([AFRICOM](#)) in the US Defense Department in 2007 is one of the signs of this growing concern. Since then, the US has become more involved on the continent by providing military intelligence, carrying out joint operations and training exercises with African countries and establishing security cooperation programmes. One important element of US military presence in Africa is the base at Camp Lemonier (Djibouti), the busiest drone base outside Afghanistan, which is used to carry out attacks in Somalia and Yemen.

The US only adopted a ‘Strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa’ in 2012.

Given the numerous US interests and activities in Africa, it is somewhat surprising that the country had no overarching strategy towards the continent until 2012. The White House’s ‘US Strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa’¹², published that year, outlines four pillars for US engagement: i) strengthen democratic institutions and the promotion of human rights and civil society; ii) spur economic growth by setting up an enabling environment for trade and investment; iii) advance peace and security, counterterrorist groups and the fight against other transnational threats, and advance regional security cooperation; iv) promote opportunity and development, address constraints to growth, promote poverty reduction and food security and transform Africa’s public health.

Alongside the security and governance pillars, it is possible to distinguish a markedly economic orientation in the other two pillars of this strategy. The economic angle has, in fact, become much more salient in the US

¹⁰ ‘Victim of shale revolution, Nigeria stops exporting oil to US’, Beyond BRICS, Financial Times.

¹¹ For a wider reflection on the emerging energy landscape in the Atlantic see Paul Isbell, ‘Atlantic Energy and the Changing Global Energy Flow Map’, Atlantic Future, 2014.

¹² <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/209377.pdf>

The first US-Africa leaders' summit was organised by US President Barack Obama in Washington in August 2014.

engagement with Africa in the past few years, owing to a growing perception of the need to 'catch up' with the Chinese presence in Africa¹³. This has been most clearly visible in the first ever [US-Africa Leaders' Summit](#) organised by President Obama in August 2014, in which over 50 African leaders met in Washington with US political leaders, business representatives and civil society organisations. The summit was held under the theme 'Investing in the next generation' and agreements, new initiatives and investments totalling USD 37 billion were announced on the occasion. There was no final outcome document, but discussions were centred around five key themes:

The summit's five priorities were:

- investment
- peace and stability
- governance
- women
- young people.

1. **Investing in Africa's future** - The central focus of the summit was to showcase Africa's economic potential and to strengthen trade and investment ties. The US announced the commitment of USD 12 billion in additional funds from the World Bank, Sweden and the US to expand the [Power Africa](#) initiative launched in 2013, which aims to add more than 30 000 megawatts (MW) of cleaner and more efficient electricity generation capacity and to increase electricity access by adding 60 million new home and business connections. The private sector also occupied a prominent role: the US announced USD 7 billion in new financing for the Doing Business in Africa campaign, and in the framework of the US-Africa Business Forum USD 14 billion in new business deals were announced. In addition, there was much discussion around the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the preferential trade system providing duty-free access for the US to a range of products from 40 African countries, which is set to expire in September 2015. AGOA is the cornerstone of the US commercial strategy in Africa and summit participants agreed on the importance of 'the prompt, long-term renewal of an enhanced AGOA'.
2. **Advancing peace and regional stability** - The summit also discussed the need to address the root causes of conflict and to confront transnational security threats. The US also announced two new security initiatives: the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (A-Prep), which will 'build the capacities of African militaries to rapidly deploy peacekeepers in response to emerging conflict'. During the next three to five years, the US will devote USD 110 million annually to achieving this with six countries: Senegal, Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. In parallel to this, a new Security Governance Initiative (SGI) will build up the military and civilian capacities to fight extremism and terrorism. The SGI will be piloted in six countries: Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia, with USD 65 million devoted to the first year of the initiative.
3. **Governing for the next generation** - The summit participants agreed on the importance of efficient, effective and transparent

¹³ Jessica Pugliese, Andrew Westbury and Amadou Sy, '[The U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit: Building a Strategy Together with Africa](#)', Brookings, June 2014.

governance, as well as the protection of human rights. At the request of African leaders, a joint high-level working group was established to develop a plan of action against illicit financial flows and corruption.

4. **Investing in women for peace and prosperity** - US and African leaders resolved to work towards fuller participation for women in government, business and civil society.
5. **Providing skills and opportunities to young people** - The creation of jobs and opportunities and the promotion of science, technology, research and innovation skills were discussed in the summit, alongside concrete US initiatives such as the Young African Leaders' Initiative (YALI).

The economic- and business-oriented character of the summit is clear from the topics discussed, but it is also interesting to note that this partly 'crowded out' development cooperation initiatives, despite the US being the world's largest donor. This reflects how Africa's engagement with partners such as China has shifted the political narrative of Africa's international relations away from aid and development towards a focus on economic growth (that is expected will contribute to development) through trade and investment. This is clear also from the high level of interest from the US private sector in the summit – a dynamic which is also visible in the EU's approach to the continent. Further evidence of this emphasis on Africa's economic potential is Obama's announcement that his fourth visit to sub-Saharan Africa – the highest number for any US president – will coincide with his participation in the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit hosted by Kenya in July 2015.

The summit had a clear economic- and business-oriented character, also visible in Obama's fourth visit to Africa, scheduled for June 2015.

Alongside business opportunities, security concerns were also very present in the summit – as is seen from the launch of the new A-Prep and SGI security initiatives – including new security challenges such as the Ebola epidemic (which prevented some African leaders from travelling to Washington). An interesting development in this regard has been the mobilisation of the US military in providing coordination of logistics, training, and engineering support to the USAID response to the Ebola epidemic through [Operation United Assistance](#), which was launched in September 2014. By contrast, good governance and human rights issues seemed to occupy a less prominent place on the summit's agenda, even though a parallel civil society forum was organised ahead of the summit¹⁴. Overall, the summit was regarded as a success, helping to raise Africa's profile in the US foreign policy agenda and resulting in concrete announcements. The challenge for the US now, some analysts point out,¹⁵ is to give this engagement continuity, ensure the

Ensuring the implementation of the US-Africa summit's commitments will be a challenge.

¹⁴ Chris McGreal, '[Africa leaders' summit: why human rights are off Obama's agenda](#)', The Guardian.

¹⁵ Richard Dowie '[Reflections on the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit](#)', Center for Strategic and International Studies; Monde Muyangwa, '[Reflections on the summit: whither US-Africa relations?](#)', Wilson Center; Whitney Schneidman, '[2015: A pivotal year for Obama's Africa legacy](#)', Brookings.

implementation of commitments, and maintain regular contacts with the continent in the absence of a strong institutional setup for US-Africa relations. A positive sign in this regard was the organisation on 13 April 2015 of the third [US-African Union Commission High-Level Dialogue](#), which included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure US support for establishing an African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

4 The EU: Institutionally dense, politically challenging relations

The EU and its Member States have maintained much closer relations with Africa than the US or China.

The EU has woven a complex network of institutional, economic and political relations with African countries.

The EU and, in particular, some of its Member States have historically maintained much closer relations with Africa than China or the US. Most of these links are, of course, closely intertwined with the colonial experience which shaped relations between Europe and Africa and, arguably, has also had an important influence on the past five decades of post-colonial relations. During this time the EU has woven a complex – and often overlapping – network of institutional, economic and political relations with African countries. Since 1975 the successive Lomé conventions had served as the basis for trade relations and development cooperation between Europe and sub-Saharan African countries in the framework of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group. With the Cotonou Agreement (2000), ACP-EU relations entered a new phase of strengthened partnership including, for the first time, important political considerations. Cotonou provides the framework for political dialogue – including human rights issues (notably Articles 8 and 9)¹⁶ – development cooperation, through the European Development Fund (EDF), and trade relations with the launch of negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and ACP regions. EPAs were conceived as WTO-compatible trade and development agreements granting ACP countries duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market in exchange for reciprocal (if asymmetric) EU access to their markets. This requirement was strongly criticised by ACP countries and civil society organisations in the EU which felt that it could be detrimental to the development objectives of ACP countries, whose economies were much less developed than those in the EU. EPAs have thus become one of the most controversial elements in ACP-EU relations in the past decade and a half during which negotiations have been ongoing. Up until 2013 only five African countries (Cameroon, Mauritius, Seychelles, Zimbabwe and Madagascar) had signed and implemented an EPA with the EU. However, in 2014, following the entry into force of a new EU Market Access Regulation that threatened to end the market access enjoyed at the time by some African middle-income countries, EPA negotiations were concluded between the EU and the West African (ECOWAS), Southern African (SADC) and East

¹⁶ Jean Bossuyt, Camilla Rocca, Brecht Lein, '[Political Dialogue on Human Rights under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement](#)', European Parliament, Policy Department, DG EXPO, 2014.

A Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted in 2007 to move beyond development cooperation and towards common interests and objectives.

African Community (EAC) regions, covering a total of 27 countries. Although this is an important breakthrough in EU-ACP relations, these agreements still have to be ratified by both parties and implemented, which will be a long and drawn-out process.

In parallel to the Cotonou framework, the EU has also advanced relations with the African continent as a whole – often with the African Union (AU) as a key interlocutor – in order to overcome the traditional distinction between North and sub-Saharan Africa. In practice, however, the two regions are still dealt with through different EU policy and funding instruments: the Neighbourhood Policy for North Africa and Cotonou for sub-Saharan Africa. The EU and Africa adopted a [Joint Africa-EU Strategy \(JAES\)](#) in 2007 to establish a partnership of equals and move beyond development cooperation towards the pursuit of common interests and mutual strategic objectives. The JAES outlined eight thematic partnerships, and joint expert groups meet regularly to advance each of the different partnerships with different degrees of success¹⁷. Despite the dense institutional set-up, political dialogue between the EU and Africa has proved a more challenging pursuit. The existence of clear disagreements over sensitive issues, ranging from EPAs to human rights, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the low profile of the African continent – with the exception of peace and security concerns – in the EU’s overall external policy, hampered regular and fluid political dialogue and held back the JAES from fulfilling its potential.

The new Pan-African Programme (PANAF) is a dedicated instrument to support the JAES.

In 2014, however, EU-Africa relations received an important boost and appeared to enter into a new phase. This was due to separate, but closely linked, developments such as the conclusion of the EPA negotiations. Another important milestone was the creation of the Pan-African Programme (PANAF), the first dedicated financial envelope destined to fund continental and trans-regional activities in support of the JAES. The PANAF amounts to EUR 845 million for the 2014 to 2020 period, and its first [multiannual indicative programme \(2014-2017\)](#) aims to support the five priorities jointly agreed at the 2014 EU-Africa summit.

The fourth EU-Africa summit was organised in Brussels in April 2014. It adopted a joint declaration, a declaration on migration and a roadmap that runs until 2017.

This summit constituted a crucial element in boosting the profile of EU-Africa relations. The fourth EU-Africa summit was organised in Brussels in April 2014 under the theme ‘Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace’. This signals the underlying objective of the summit: further moving EU-Africa relations away from development cooperation and towards a greater emphasis on trade and investment. The summit produced a ten-page [joint declaration](#) taking stock of recent events, recognising the interdependency of both continents and reaffirming common interests and values. The summit also concluded

¹⁷ The eight partnerships included: peace and security; democratic governance and human rights; regional economic integration, trade and infrastructure; Millennium Development Goals; climate change; energy; migration, mobility and employment; and science, information society and space.

For a detailed discussion see Damien Helly, Essete Abebe Bekele, Sahra el Fassi and Greta Galeazzi, [‘The Implementation of the Joint Africa Europe Strategy: Rebuilding Confidence and Commitments’](#) European Parliament, Policy Department, DG EXPO, 2014.

with a separate joint [declaration on migration and mobility](#) and – perhaps the most important document – an [action-oriented roadmap](#) for speeding up the implementation of the JAES in the 2014 to 2017 period, focused on five priority areas:

1. **Peace and security.** An urgent aspect in light of the ongoing crises in the Sahel, South Sudan and Central Africa. It is also the area in which greatest progress has been made within the JAES. The EU envisions support to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Standby Force, more cooperation with sub-regional bodies and a focus on maritime security.
2. **Democracy, good governance and human rights.** One of the guiding principles of EU external action and also considered a shared value between the EU and Africa, yet its application remains problematic in practice. The EU's ambitions in this area had to be downscaled for the summit, and the roadmap – while calling for more cooperation, including through the ongoing AU-EU human rights dialogue and cultural cooperation – has a rather general character.
3. **Human development.** A priority brought to the agenda by African countries and which comprises cooperation on science, technology and innovation, higher education and migration.
4. **Sustainable and inclusive development and growth, and continental integration.** A central element of the partnership, it clearly emphasises the role of the private sector, investment and trade, to the detriment of traditional development assistance. There are also important references to the African economic transformation agenda (transport and communication infrastructure, industrialisation and energy) and a clear emphasis on agriculture and food security. The roadmap supports the conclusion of the African continental free trade area (for which negotiations will start this year) and considers EPAs to be possible building blocks to this end.
5. **Global and emerging issues.** The priority within this area is centred on environmental and climate change. By contrast, the section on the post-2015 development framework – of crucial importance for Africa – appears somewhat unambitious.

The five priorities of the roadmap are:

- i. peace and security
- ii. democracy, good governance and human rights
- iii. human development
- iv. development, growth and integration
- v. global and emerging issues.

Thus, in many ways, EU-Africa relations entered a new phase last year, owing not only to the summit but also to other factors, some of which have already been mentioned (EPAs, PANAF), and some of which are linked to the coming into office of a new leadership at the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) or the adoption of new bilateral, regional, continental and thematic cooperation programmes for the 2014-2020 period. The summit served, however, to emphasise the EU and Africa's willingness to shift the partnership towards issues of mutual interest in peace and security and economic growth and transformation. Setting out in this new direction is a fundamental task for the coming years, which is also likely to be challenging, owing partly to the inertia of the institutionally heavy set-up of EU-Africa relations and also partly to political relations sometimes being

The expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020 provides a perfect opportunity to adopt an ambitious strategy for Africa and to streamline the dense institutional network of relations.

difficult when it comes to issues regarding democracy and human rights.

Nonetheless, it is essential for the EU to adopt a clear-sighted and ambitious approach strategy for its relations with Africa that builds on areas of mutual interest. This will require commitment at the highest political level to carefully balance the interests of different policy areas (trade, development, security, migration, human rights) and to streamline the complex institutional network of relations. In this regard, the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020 provides a very good opportunity to clarify the EU's objectives regarding Africa and also the Caribbean and Pacific regions. Although the [post-Cotonou discussions](#) have so far been largely dormant, this will change in the coming months, as the Commission and the EEAS will publish in the last quarter of the year a Green Paper on the post-Cotonou scenarios that will serve to launch a public consultation on the subject.

5 Common interests: Competing or complementary strategies?

As the previous sections show, Africa, while remaining somewhat marginal in the global geopolitical strategies of the EU, the US and China, has generated renewed interest and engagement from these actors since the start of the century. While each of these actors has a different perspective with regard to their relations with Africa, there does, however, appear to be a convergence around three essential themes.

5.1 Peace and security

Armed conflict, organised crime, terrorist groups and the persistent fragility of African states are security concerns common to the EU, the US and China.

The first theme – which is also the most prominent one in the media and public opinion – is security and the continued threats for the continent derived from armed conflict, organised crime and terrorist groups, all of them amplified by the persisting fragility of African states, particularly those in the Sahel and central African regions. Unlike the proxy wars of the Cold War era, Western security engagement in Africa since the 1990s has thus been largely framed as a response to the 'new wars' – often intra-state conflicts, sometimes mobilised around ethnic or religious identities and linked to resource exploitation and illicit economic activities – and closely related to state fragility, and sometimes even state collapse. These conflicts initially posed a puzzle for the international community, which lacked a clear framework for intervention: the doctrine of the '[responsibility to protect](#)' responds in many ways to the challenges posed by these conflicts. Since 2001, however, the threat posed by terrorist groups (often under the guise of radical Islamic ideology) has come to the forefront of security concerns. This contributed to a re-engagement from the US with the African continent, visible in the creation of a dedicated Africa military command, the establishment of military and drone bases (Djibouti and, more recently, Niger), and the increased cooperation with African countries – often by sending out intelligence and military advisers and/or special forces.

While peace and security is also a central concern for the EU, its overall

The EU has established close cooperation with the African Union in peace and security, including by funding peace operations.

China has traditionally sought to abstain from peace and security debates in Africa, but this is rapidly changing.

EU, US and Chinese involvement in peace and security needs to engage African countries and regional organisations, and promote multilateral cooperation and respect for international law.

approach to the issue has followed a somewhat different logic (at least as far as the EU institutions are concerned, since some Member States are indeed engaging in counterterrorist and military cooperation with a similar perspective to that of the US). The EU has established close cooperation with the AU in peace and security matters (the JAES partnership on this subject is widely regarded as the best-functioning one), including joint meetings between the EU and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), support for the African security architecture and even – through the [African Peace Facility](#) – financial support for African-led military operations, notably in Somalia (AMISOM). The EU has also deployed a number of Common Security and Defence (CSDP) missions in Africa in response to particular crises or problems (fighting piracy off the Somali coast (Atalanta and Nestor), the conflict in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA, EUMAM)), and to train African armed forces (EUTM Somalia, EUTM Mali) or reform the broader security sector (EUSEC in the Democratic Republic of Congo).

China, unlike the US and the EU, has so far not been closely involved in African peace and security matters. Although, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), China has not been able to abstain entirely from these debates, the country has largely maintained a policy of non-intervention and respect for state sovereignty. The 2011 military intervention in Libya – made possible owing to the Chinese and Russian abstentions at the UNSC (Resolution 1973) – was a notable exception, but in light of the divisions this move generated among African countries, as well as the negative consequences that followed, this is unlikely to be a solid precedent. Nonetheless, we have seen more Chinese involvement in African peace and security in recent years, partly as a result of the country's growing presence and interests across the continent. Some recent examples include the deployment of military vessels in the Gulf of Aden as part of the UN-authorized operations to fight piracy and – perhaps the most visible sign – China's contribution to the UN peacekeeping missions in Mali and South Sudan.

Despite their different approaches, therefore, China, the US and the EU all pay important attention to the question of peace and security, which suggests the potential for growing cooperation in the matter. This cooperation is necessary to ensure coordination and prevent bilateral initiatives being excessively focused on military and counterterrorism activities which may be ineffective or even have the counterproductive effect of bolstering undemocratic and non-transparent regimes¹⁸. The recent and horrific terrorist attack at Garissa University in Kenya in early April, in which 148 people were killed, has shown the limitations in Kenya's response to terrorism, owing to important governance shortcomings such as widespread corruption¹⁹. Strengthening cooperation with African countries, regional and continental peace and security structures (with

¹⁸ Alex de Waal, ['Why Obama's \\$5 Billion Counterterrorism Fund Will Actually Support Terrorism'](#), Boston Review, 11 June 2014.

¹⁹ Paul Hidalgo, ['Kenya's Own Worst Enemy'](#), Foreign Affairs, 12 April 2015.

which the EU maintains the closest cooperation out of the three actors) and the UN is an important element to ensure that the promotion of peace and security in Africa by external actors is effective and encourages multilateral cooperation, the protection of human rights and respect for international law.

5.2 Economic relations and sustainable development

Alongside security concerns, recent years have also seen a growing emphasis on the need to harness the economic potential of the continent. China's growing involvement in Africa – despite some criticisms of its excessive focus on natural resources – has been one of the main driving forces placing Africa's economic potential at centre stage. The EU and the US, however, are increasingly recognising this and promoting more economic engagement with Africa (which requires an active engagement from the private sector). Increasingly, all three actors have adopted a narrative of 'win-win' economic engagement which presents increased trade and investment as a central element in the promotion of sustainable development. Interestingly, this has also meant that the EU and the US are shifting some of the emphasis (at least in the political discourse) away from traditional development cooperation, despite remaining the largest donors to Africa. This shift could have an important significance, as development cooperation spending – at least for the EU – is usually more centred on social sectors (education and health), governance and support for civil society, which are not necessarily strengthened by economic growth²⁰.

China, the US and the EU all seek to harness Africa's economic potential and to make this a driver for the continent's sustainable development.

Interestingly, China not only continues to expand its aid package to Africa, but the character of this aid is also changing. Chinese aid responds to a different logic from that of the US and the EU, emphasising, for example, the principle of 'mutual benefit'. This is translated in practice into the requirement, when receiving aid, to use a part of it to purchase Chinese goods and services (a practice known as 'tied aid' which the US and the EU have largely reduced or eliminated in line with aid effectiveness principles). Chinese aid also has an important component (around one half of the total) of concessional loans, not grants. The publication of China's second White Paper on foreign aid in 2014 is interesting in that it points to some of the changing orientations and discourse around its aid. This second White Paper appears to move away from 'hard sectors' (mining, infrastructure) towards social and public sectors and infrastructure, and to put a stronger emphasis on poverty reduction, helping to improve people's livelihoods, and regional cooperation mechanisms²¹. Even more interestingly, in 2014, Beijing and the African Development Bank set up a USD 2 billion investment vehicle, called

China's aid to Africa is not only growing, but is also increasingly focused on social infrastructure and poverty eradication.

²⁰ In 2013 the EU institutions disbursed a total of EUR 9.2 billion in aid around the world, of which EUR 3.5 billion targeted social infrastructure and services, compared with EUR 1.8 billion for economic infrastructure and production sectors.

²¹ 27 % of China's aid is focused on social and public infrastructure, while economic infrastructure represents 44 %. See '[China's Second White Paper on Foreign Aid](#)', UNDP Issue brief, August 2014.

the '[Africa Growing Together Fund](#)', which represents China's first multilateral contribution in Africa.

It is possible, however, to see a certain convergence in the priorities of the EU, the US and China around the themes of economic growth and transformation and sustainable development in Africa. These are also largely convergent with those set out by African countries – most ambitiously articulated at a continental level in the African Union's [Agenda 2063](#) adopted in January 2015. While the general objective of promoting economic growth and sustainable development is a wide-ranging one, there are a few central elements whose importance is highlighted by all stakeholders, including the need to boost investment in transport and communication infrastructure, the energy sector, agriculture and food production, as well as an emphasis on economic transformation and value addition through Africa's integration into global value chains (and the associated requirement for meeting technological capacities and human capital needs). The success of this agenda, it is widely argued, will require not only public involvement and development aid, but also an important engagement from the private sector within the African continent and from outside. This engagement could, however, entail risks if it leads to increased economic competition for access to natural resources and markets. To minimise these risks it is important to put in place a strong regulatory framework (including trade and financial matters) at global, regional and national levels that can help foster sustainable development in Africa.

Infrastructure, energy, agriculture, economic transformation and a strong regulatory framework are central for Africa's sustainable development.

In fact, the future development of African countries cannot be disentangled from current global discussions and negotiations around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the post-2015 period, and the related conferences on financing for development in Addis Ababa in July – which will look at public and private domestic and international sources of finance and the need for a strong global framework for combating illicit financial flows – and the Paris climate conference that will negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. The outcomes of these negotiations, and the post-2015 framework as a whole, will define in important ways the framework for engagement with the African continent and the possibilities for success in fostering sustainable development in the years to come. Another equally important factor for Africa's future growth and development is the international trade regime. In this context, some analysts note the risk derived from the impasse of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Doha development round and the subsequent appearance of large regional free trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the US, or the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement between the US and 12 Asian and American countries. Although Africa is not directly involved in these negotiations, it may be negatively affected both by the direct economic effects of these agreements (if they lead to trade being diverted away from Africa) and by the risk of the global trade system being fragmented owing to the

The outcome of this year's negotiations on climate change, the development financing framework and the Sustainable Development Goals – like the future of the global trade regime – will have a huge impact on Africa's future perspectives.

conclusion of large bilateral agreements that exclude developing countries²². Africa's own regional economic integration can help to minimise these negative impacts, although this integration is still embryonic. Negotiations for a continental African free trade area are set to start later this year and will receive an important boost with the launch, in June of this year, in Egypt, of the Tripartite Free Trade Area between the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), covering 26 African countries²³.

5.3 Political relations

Chinese, US and EU engagements with the African continent appear to converge thus around two different poles: the economic potential harboured by the continent, and important security concerns owing to state fragility, armed conflict and terrorist groups. A third important element in these actors' African strategies – and one in which there is a greater divergence in perspectives between China, the US and the EU – is political relations. These can only be discussed here in very general terms, but it is possible to see that, while for the US and China the dialogue with the African continent is largely framed by political logics, the EU has further codified and embedded these in legally binding agreements (Cotonou) – for relations with individual countries – and a more developed institutional set-up for continental dialogue, such as the JAES. Even though the EU has the best-developed framework for political relations with Africa, this does not mean that the dialogue runs smoothly: there are indeed a number of issues and areas – often related to democracy, good governance and human rights – where views diverge between the EU and Africa.

Nonetheless, both China and the US have followed the EU in establishing closer and more structured frameworks for their relations with Africa at a continental level. This in turn has resulted in a strengthening of the African Union (AU) as the main African interlocutor with external partners as well as a forum for developing common African positions. While the EU has long-established working relations with different AU organs (ranging from joint PSC meetings to College-to-College meetings of the EU and African Commissions), the US has usually placed much of its political thrust in bilateral approaches and initiatives. It was only in 2013 that the US and the AU Commission signed an agreement to formalise a high-level dialogue between the parties. China has also traditionally favoured bilateral relations with African countries but is also becoming more involved at a continental level. A clear sign of this is the new USD 200 million AU headquarters in Addis

The EU has the best-developed institutional framework for relations with Africa, but European and African views often diverge (particularly on human rights issues).

China and the US have both recently sought to establish closer and more structured relations with Africa at a continental level.

²² See Marika Lerch and Manuel Manrique 'The TTIP's potential impact on developing countries: A review of existing literature and selected issues', European Parliament, Policy Department, DG EXPO, 2015.

²³ Bridges Africa, '[Launch of African Tripartite FTA now set for June](#)', March 2015. See also Ionel Zamfir, '[The Tripartite Free Trade Area project: Integration in southern and eastern Africa](#)', European Parliament Research Service, March 2015.

Ababa, inaugurated in 2012 and entirely financed by China. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang addressed the AU summit during his visit to the continent in May 2014, and in February 2015 China announced the establishment of a permanent mission to the AU. The emergence of the AU as the central interlocutor for African matters raises important questions: these relate not only to the challenges which the continental body still faces in terms of capacities, but also to the interplay between the AU and the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The AU remains the overarching continental organ, helping to establish common African position in matters ranging from development priorities to negotiating positions in the post-2015 framework and climate change agreement or – more politically controversial – non-cooperation with the ICC. At the same time, most economic integration processes and even trade negotiations (in the case of EPAs) are being driven by RECs, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the EAC. RECs are also often active in political and security matters: ECOWAS in Mali, or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in South Sudan.

The EU and the US have traditionally emphasised the importance of human rights and democracy, whereas China has maintained a position of non-interference.

Some of the African Union's positions on sensitive political points – especially those regarding human rights and, more concretely, the ICC and universal justice – have become the most controversial aspect in the continent's relations with the US and, in particular, the EU. This is also the main differentiating element in Africa's relations with China. While both the EU and the US have traditionally emphasised the importance of democratic processes and respect for human rights in their engagement with some African countries, China has instead regularly maintained a clear position of non-interference in domestic affairs and of respect for state sovereignty. This is particularly challenging for the EU, not only because it has defined respect for human rights as one of the guiding principles of its external actions, but also because of the historical legacy of colonial relations, which allows African countries to tie their criticisms of the EU and Member States in with accusations of neo-colonialism that are not levelled against other actors (even if these actors sometimes have similar policies)²⁴. At the same time, it is true that the practical implementation of democratic and human rights principles is sometimes carried out unevenly across Africa, which allows for accusations of double standards against the EU.

While it is highly unlikely that the US and the EU will agree with China on matters related to human rights and democracy, this does not necessarily prevent any cooperation with China in various other important areas. There are certain crucial global issues on which the EU, the US, China and African actors can cooperate for mutually beneficial outcomes, even if during the negotiations the specific position adopted by each country or group of

²⁴ A recent example concerns Africa's threats to boycott the EU-Africa summit in Brussels if Robert Mugabe was not invited to attend (which led to an invitation finally being issued), compared with African countries' much more moderate reaction at the same decision taken by the US administration when organising the Leaders' Summit in Washington months later.

Despite these differences, all three actors are able to cooperate with Africa on global issues, including climate change, illicit financial flows, transnational threats, and migration and mobility.

countries actually diverges. Some of these examples include: environmental issues and the negotiation of an ambitious, binding global agreement to fight climate change; fostering a stable and transparent global financial system while targeting corruption and illicit financial flows; fighting common threats such as terrorist groups, organised crime or health epidemics; or a new international understanding of migration and the opportunities and challenges it presents, including the role of the diasporas and of returning migrants. This concerns not only migration from Africa to other parts of the world but also from countries such as China to Africa, and in particular intra-African migration, which represents the most substantial proportion of African migration and sometimes leads to problems of integration and xenophobia, most recently exemplified by the violent attacks against migrants in South Africa in April 2015.

6 Outlook and policy options for the European Parliament

Africa is generating growing international interest centred around:

- i) trade and economic relations, leading to sustainable development, and
- ii) persistent security concerns.

The European Parliament should pursue a more strategic and mutually beneficial engagement with Africa.

This may involve:

- 1) launching a deep reflection on the EU's relations with Africa in anticipation of the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement;

During the past decade, external actors – including, but not limited to, China the US and the EU – have grown more interested in Africa. This in-depth analysis has demonstrated that their interest responds to various concrete factors, and notably the African continent's rapid economic growth, which is largely a consequence of emerging markets' (and especially China's) growing demand for African resources. Furthermore, it is also possible to see a convergence of external interests around two central poles:

- i) intensifying trade and economic relations with Africa to access resources and markets and to help the continent channel economic growth into sustainable development, and
- ii) persistent security concerns deriving from armed conflict, state fragility and transnational threats (terrorist groups, organised crime).

Despite this convergence of interests – which are also largely shared by African actors, although this paper has not examined these – China, the US and the EU have diverging views regarding the political dimension of their relations with Africa. This is particularly true regarding the importance of human rights and democracy. There are nonetheless important global issues on which the EU can cooperate with the US and China, as well as with African partners.

As this paper has argued, the growing international interest in Africa could lead to important opportunities, including a change in the continent's place in the global order. In this regard, the European Parliament can explore the following options in order to pursue a more politically ambitious, strategic and mutually beneficial engagement with the African continent – and one that may involve cooperating with China and the US:

- **Begin a deep reflection of the EU's relations with Africa in anticipation of the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement**, and of the negotiations on a future framework for relations with ACP countries. A clear political vision for EU-Africa relations is necessary in order to reform and streamline the current dense (and often overlapping)

network of institutional links. The European Commission and the EEAS will publish a Green Paper on the post-Cotonou scenario and launch a public consultation in the later part of 2015. While Parliament should participate in this consultation, it should not simply wait for the launch. Parliament can already start discussing this crucial subject and proactively help shape the discussions – something that would be welcomed by other stakeholders. Given the wide-ranging political, institutional and even legal implications of a successor to Cotonou, these discussions will be challenging and require a clear vision. Diverse Parliament bodies must participate in a coherent, coordinated and strategic manner.

2) emphasising the importance of responding to security challenges in Africa;

- **Stress the importance of responding to security challenges in Africa.** Parliament should do this by emphasising the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict (including poverty, underdevelopment, state fragility, corruption, the lack of democracy), adopting a comprehensive approach that mobilises EU activities across different policy areas, and promoting international cooperation in peace and security with African actors and other external partners. The EU has the closest links to the African institutions in this area, and can play a central role in fostering collaboration between African countries and regional organisations, the UN, and the US and China. This may involve exploring options for better balancing the financial and operational burdens of peace operations in African countries, including the newly established force responding to the threat of Boko Haram.

3) recognising Africa's huge economic potential and emphasising the need to turn this potential into the driver of sustainable development;

- **Recognise Africa's huge economic potential and emphasise the need to turn this potential into the driver of sustainable development.** This will require engaging with private sector actors – who have already shown an interest in this matter – inside and outside Africa in critical areas such as transport, communication and financial infrastructure, and energy generation. External engagement should, however, emphasise the need to transform Africa's economies by promoting industrialisation and value added activities, as well as Africa's integration into global value chains and a transition towards low-carbon, 'green economy' models. It is also essential to help meet the demands for human capital that this transformation will require by boosting African education and research.

4) noting some of the risks deriving from growing economic competition over access to Africa's resources and markets;

- **Note some of the risks of growing economic competition over access to Africa's resources and markets.** These risks can only be minimised if a strong and coherent framework for international engagement is put in place: the negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals may be particularly important in this regard. Parliament should emphasise how important it is for the private sector to act responsibly, for a multilateral global trade regime to recognise the vulnerabilities of developing countries in the framework of the WTO, for the stable global financial system to fight illicit financial flows, and for there to be adequate labour and environmental standards. Because economic growth will not automatically lead to sustainable

development in Africa, Parliament should continue to stress the crucial role played by development aid for many least-developed countries in Africa, and the importance of external actors – including China – providing aid in accordance with the Busan principles for development effectiveness. Parliament should also highlight the importance of basic social services – which the EU has traditionally supported in its development cooperation – and of social protection systems to reduce inequalities and contribute to socioeconomic inclusion.

5) continuing to place human rights at the forefront of the EU's external agenda, including in the Union's relations with Africa.

- **Continue to place human rights at the forefront of the EU's external agenda, including in the Union's relations with Africa.** At the same time, Parliament should advocate a more coherent implementation of these principles to minimise double standards. (Because of the historical legacies, the EU must avoid appearing to act in a 'neo-colonialist' or 'imperialist' manner.) Parliament should also stress the need to boost and widen mutually beneficial links between the EU and Africa – and potentially other partners as well – beyond political and institutional relations. These should be extended to EU and African parliaments, businesses, civil society organisations and media, cultural and educational institutions. Mobility and exchanges should be expanded between EU and African citizens within and across continents.